Chapter 8

SUMMARY

The State of Illinois - through the development of its Statewide Communications Interoperability Plan - has made a commitment to provide a state-of-the-art interoperable communications network that will serve the needs of its user community locally, regionally, and statewide. The plan ambitiously promises to bring interoperable communications to every public safety agency in Illinois, regardless of an agency's governmental or non-governmental affiliation. Guided by the Interoperability Continuum, the plan's developers were mindful of the needs of the end users and tailored the SCIP to maximize its benefits on behalf of those users.

Highlights of Illinois' plan include:

- **Governance**

  The Statewide Interoperability Executive Committee was legislatively established in July 2006. As the SIEC matures in its governance role, its influence will become more purposeful and its impact will be felt throughout the public safety community in Illinois. By delineating the roles of both the SIEC and the Illinois Terrorism Task Force Communications Committee, the SCIP clearly establishes the former as the governance body for interoperability issues and the latter as the developing architect for the plan. With the roles of both committees being fully articulated, Illinois' plan promotes accountability and propels both groups forward with defined purposes and responsibilities.

  Governance is an embedded component of many of the goals and strategic initiatives contained within Illinois' SCIP. The SIEC will guide the expansion of interoperability in Illinois through its assessment and utilization of the CASM data. The SIEC will also evaluate grant requests from local agencies and award monies from the PSIC grant to successful applicants, ensuring the long-term applicability of those funds for targeted purposes. Integration of the Chicago/Cook County TICP will be accomplished under the guidance of the SIEC which will lead to the seamless unification of preparedness, response, and communications standards between the Chicago/Cook County UASI and the State of Illinois.

  Under Illinois' plan, governance is active, ongoing, and purpose-driven, and the SIEC members readily recognize the importance of their role in keeping Illinois as a national leader in the field of interoperability.

❖ **Standard Operating Procedures**

Of all the elements of the Interoperability Continuum, Illinois readily recognized its deficiency in this lane and, spurred by the development of its SCIP, is working to erase that shortfall. Committees with representatives from mutual aid organizations, government agencies, and the private sector are formalizing standard operating procedures from the series of operating protocols which had been used to direct interoperability usage in the past. The newly-developed SOPs include NIMS-compliance requirements and are being used to optimize the use of interoperable communications in a multi-agency/multi-disciplinary/multi-hazard environment. Plans call for the SOPs to be transmitted to public safety practitioners through a series of regional workshops sponsored by the ITTF. Additionally, the SOPS will be presented to targeted users at public safety conferences and intra-disciplinary meetings as well as via on-line announcements and direct mailings to members of the mutual aid associations.

Standardization of operating procedures will facilitate the development, expansion and use of systems that operate in or interoperate with 700/800 MHz bands via voice, data, and/or video signals. SOPs will be reviewed and modified as part of the update to the Illinois' SCIP, and Illinois will work with contiguous states to develop mutually acceptable, coordinated standards of interoperability that will promote interstate collaboration and facilitate mutual aid responses. To ensure the SOPs reflect the best interests of the public safety community, practitioners will be solicited for feedback and input during regional workshops, conferences, and post-operational debriefings.

❖ **Technology**

The mandate to compile this plan served as the impetus to conduct a statewide assessment of the technology in use at all levels of the public safety spectrum. Through the use of the CASM tool, Illinois will possess a comprehensive assessment of the state of the interoperability technology in use in Illinois today. This assessment will be used to identify areas of immediate need for technology upgrades, to plan and budget for ongoing technology updates, and to explore long-term opportunities to expand and maximize the availability and use of interoperable communications in the state.

The collaborative partnership between the State of Illinois and the Chicago/Cook County UASI will assure the state's most populous region possesses the interoperable technology that will enable its public safety practitioners to engage in cross-disciplinary communications at unprecedented levels with ease.

With an interoperability vision that includes the creation of an operating environment in which all public safety responders will possess the knowledge, technology, and resources to seamlessly communicate through and across disciplines, Illinois acknowledges the inextricable link that exists between technology and interoperability. In support of its interoperability vision, Illinois will develop, sustain, and enhance systems, technologies, resources, and standards that achieve meaningful and measurable improvements in the state of interoperability for public safety communications. Illinois will support the development and expansion of Strategic Technology Reserves capable of re-establishing communications when critical infrastructure is damaged or destroyed resultant of a major disaster or terrorist attack. Through its judicious administration of all monies allocated for interoperable communications, Illinois will ensure the availability of funds to research, procure, and distribute upgraded technologies on behalf of public safety practitioners.

Technology will play an inherent role in the attainment of Illinois' interoperability vision. With the achievement of that vision, Illinois will ensure its citizens enjoy an enhanced quality of life and a maximized degree of protection for public peace, health, and safety through a coordinated response to emergencies, crimes, and disasters by its public safety agencies.

- **Training and Exercises**

  Recognizing the correlation which exists between proper training and regular exercises and the successful implementation and maintenance of interoperability systems. Through the administration of this plan, Illinois will reemphasize the importance of regular, comprehensive, and cross-disciplinary exercises that can be used to identify potential problems on a local/regional/state level. Additionally, these exercises will be used to identify areas of need for remedial training, promote familiarity with equipment usage, and ensure participants readily understand the standard operating procedures which govern interoperability.

  Illinois will provide field liaison/administrative support related to interoperability issues to both government and non-government agencies, and will expand its training curriculum to include the development of a Communications Unit Leader (COML). The program, designed to enhance and sustain professional standards within the interoperable communications field, will recognize individuals who successfully complete the curriculum at both the entry and advanced levels.

❖ **Usage**

Illinois enjoys a high level of interoperability usage as evidenced by the multiple shared communications systems in use within its public safety community. The continuing deployment of the STARCOM 21 radio system promises to increase interoperability usage and, through the administration of this plan, the SIEC will promote the expansion of interoperability and its indoctrination into the mainstream of public safety operations in the Prairie State. Illinois' five-tiered interoperability strategy clearly defines how interoperability works within the state, who is responsible at what level of response, and when advancement to the next response level occurs.

Training, technology, and standard operating procedures are meaningless unless the targeted practitioners engage in their use. Illinois will test interoperable communications capabilities (including participants' knowledge of standard operating procedures, familiarity with equipment, and usage techniques) during annual, full-scale exercises. The CASM study will be used to gauge usage patterns and milestones, and Illinois will actively promote all facets of interoperability use in the state on a routine, daily basis to include the use of EMnet terminals, NIMS policies and forms, interoperable frequencies, ITECS suites, and STARCOM 21 radios during workday applications

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In addition to its focus on intrastate interoperability, Illinois is working through the Mid-America Mutual Aid Consortium to bring interstate interoperability to the Midwest. Joining Illinois in this initiative are Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. MAMA-C will guide the development of enabling legislation, the establishment of deployment policies and procedures, and the standardization of interoperable systems, equipment, and training – all of which will be used to support regional fire incident responses. Using the fire services platform as a pilot, participants anticipate expanding the MAMA-C compact to include all public safety disciplines in the future.

Like the five distinct lanes of the Interoperability Continuum, the different elements of Illinois' SCIP are interdependent upon one another for success. Recognizing that all the goals and objectives must be met before success can be claimed, Illinois has adopted a yearly review schedule of the programmatic objectives found in its plan. That review, coupled with a three-year cycle for modifications to specific elements of the strategy, will enable Illinois to achieve an unprecedented level of interoperability whose purpose and practical application will transcend any singular event while contributing to the safety of first responders throughout the state.